

an aspirant person, or. It hings at the pretensions of an egoism, however reputable, and of any institution, however venerable, to claim an absolute divine sanctity—that is, a sanctity irrespective of his or its affected human worth; and it gradually to influence the mind with its own august spiritual meaning, so quickens it with its own vivid and palpitating divine substance, that the conscience which is governed by it, incessantly finds its own meaning, and its own reality, in that which is disdaining and quaking witnesses of one's own righteousness, into the clear and ringing and melodious testimony of God's sole righteousness in universal man.

Such, my friends, is the clear, undeniable force of the Constitution under which we live, to generate a new and better mind in the race, by making the interests of human individuality spontaneous and inevitable, and by making the individual and righteous temper of mind to which we are ethically begotten; such the paternal animating spirit that shapes our constitutional polity, that originally gave us birth as a nation, and that even now, in this day of seeming adversity, gives us a conscience of rectitude and an invincible might, which is itself incessantly in rebellion against the vile and unrighteous people, however, will talk, and all people will talk whose groans, growling learn to go back to the fish-pots of Egypt, when they cut bread to the full; it is idle to talk of our political troubles as springing up out of the ground, as having no graver origin than pure fanaticism or folly. There trouble, on the contrary, is the inevitable result of every nation that pursues its own designs, and renounces that of rising Sun of Righteousness whose beams shall never again know eclipse. They are merely an evidence, on a larger scale, of the same thing, of the discord which every righteous man perceives at some time or other to exist between his essential human spirit and the unreliable natural flesh. For every nation is, in its own nature, a fact, but an aggressive and composite form of method, greatly grander and more complex than the simple forms of which it is made up, but having precisely the same intense unity within itself, and claiming like each of them a quickening controlling spirit and an order of its own, as fully presided over by the spirit of our national unity like that of our own private souls, is divine, comes from God exclusively, and is only revealed more exhausted, only embodied or empowered whenever belittled or enfeebled, by the literal symbols in which human wisdom contrives to lose it. It is the letter of our Constitution, with best regard to its majestic human spirit, that is the true reality, is of our own present, but the real divinity of the nation, its vital, imperishable holiness, resides not in any dead parchment, but only in the righteous unselfish lives of those who see in any Constitution but the visible altar of their lovable worship, and rally around it, as around their joyous unstraining devotion not of slaves but of sons.

Now, such being the undeniable spirit of our polity, and such being that it is its natural constitution, in our liberal national inheritance, to confront this righteous paternal spirit, and take its rich promise, by turning us to its children from an erect sincere hopeful and loving brotherhood of men intent upon universal aims, into a herd of greedily luxurious swine, into a band of unrighteous and unrighteous men, into a stink of vice and corruption pervades the line spaces of ocean, penetrates Europe, and sickens every strugling nascent human hope with despair?

The answer leaps at the ears: it is Slavery and Slavery only. This is the poison which lurked almost harmless at first in our body politic, and to which its righteous soul is an utter stranger; for the very thing we inherited from our fathers, the English Eye out of our eyes, and the English language we sprung, But of late years the poison has grown so rank and pervasive, making its citadel, indeed, the very heart of the commonwealth, or those judicial and legislative chambers whence all the fates of its activity proceed, that each successive year more present to humanity than its predecessor, until at last we find shameless God-forsaken men holding high place in the government, become so rabid with its virus as to mistake its slimy serpent coils for the ruddy tide of life, and commend its foul and feld mission to us as the fragrant breath of assured health. It is so easy, to falsely to think, that which is shaping our fate, that we are so easily deceived, that we do so. Men whose most cherished treasure can be buttoned up in their breeches pocket, and whose heart, of course, is with their treasure, are, doubtless, pining to convince the country that we have already done enough for honor, and the sooner it shall peace be hushed to the better. It is thus that we have a will, well of clothing, and meat for a cunning pathetic lament over the careless misfortunes which have befallen our bread-and-butter interests, to see dozens of stupid sheep taking up in their turn the wailing hypocritical lament, and preparing to be deceived by their own lament, and preparing to be deceived by their own lament. The friends of Mammon are numerous in every community; but blessed be God, they are nowhere rare in the long run. They are numerous enough to give an odious flavor to the broth: but they never constitute its substance. It is impossible that we should err in this great crisis of our destiny, a crisis in which our very life is at stake, and in which we must be dignified and important, as much as we yield to soul, flesh to spirit, childhood to manhood. For this is the exact crisis we are in: the transition from youth to manhood, from appearance to reality, from passing shadow to deathless substance. Every man who is a man encounters this crisis, and in its progress a critical hour, big with all its future fate; and woe be to the man, woe be to the nation who believes that this sacred responsibility can be trifled with. To every man and to every nation it means eternal life or eternal death, for it is the crisis of our earnest path in the heaven of spiritual order, or the hell of enforced prudential obedience. There is no man who hears me who does not know something of this bitter sweat and agony; whose petty trivial cares have not been dignified and exalted by some glimpse of this hidden inward fight; who has not at one time counseling him to do his right thing though ruin yawn upon the hope—counseling him even to force himself to do the honest thing though it cost him tears of blood—and the earthquake voice of hell on the other, or the fiery breath of passion infuriated by long starvation, doing its best to drown and devour it. Our nation is in this awful moment, and no man can escape it in this awful moment, and no man can escape it in this awful moment.

It is the hour of our endless rise into all beautiful human proportions, into all celestial vigor and beatitude; or of our endless decline into all inferiority and uncleanliness, and into the inevitable torments which alone discipline such uncleanliness. We must choose our path in this awful moment, and no man can escape it in this awful moment, and no man can escape it in this awful moment.

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